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Report of the Rio Group on Poverty Statistics

Note by the Secretary-General

In accordance with a request of the Statistical Commission at its thirty-second session,** the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the Commission the report of the Rio Group on Poverty Statistics (Convener: Brazil). The Commission may wish to review the work programme of the Group.

* E/CN.3/2002/1.

** See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2001, Supplement No. 4* (E/2001/24), chap. I, sect. A.

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Report of the Rio Group on Poverty Statistics

Purpose

The main objectives of the expert group are to harness the experience and concerns of different groups and organizations in the world that are working on the measurement, interpretation and use of poverty statistics, especially when such work is being done by or in close contact with statistical offices. The identification of the indicators, methodologies and statistical sources being used should allow the preparation of a document or reports containing the state of the art in matters of poverty measurements, common procedures and best practices. At the same time, the most important difficulties could be identified and experts working with similar problems and topics could cooperate and thereby improve the quality and relevance of measurements.

Year organized

1996.

Participants

Countries

Argentina, Australia, Belarus, Botswana, Brazil, Canada, Chile, France, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Netherlands, Nigeria, Peru, Portugal, South Africa, Spain, Switzerland, Turkey, Uruguay, United Kingdom, United States of America.

Agencies and other institutions

Centro Latinoamericano de Demografía, Economic Commission for Africa, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, Statistical Office of the European Communities, Human Science Research Council, Inter-American Development Bank, International Labour Organization, United Nations Latin American and Caribbean Institute for Economic and Social Planning, London School of Economics and Political Science, Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development Paris 21, Pan American Health Organization/World Health Organization, Townsend Centre for International Poverty Research, the World Bank, United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Children's Fund, United Nations Population Fund, United Nations Statistics Division.

Meetings

First meeting:	Santiago, 7-9 May 1997.
Second meeting:	Rio de Janeiro, 13-15 May 1998.
Third meeting:	Lisbon, 22-24 November 1999.
Fourth meeting:	Rio de Janeiro, 15-17 October 2001.

Topics considered

Measurements oriented towards synthetic indicators or policy for poverty alleviation; analytical classifications of synthetic indicators of poverty statistics: absolute poverty (poverty lines and unmet basic needs approach), relative poverty, objective and subjective poverty; poverty dynamics; relations between poverty and other conceptual categories used in social policy, such as social exclusion, vulnerability and social rights; microlevel approach (household and individuals) to poverty measurements associated with policy for poverty alleviation.

In all those topics, methodological and procedural issues more widely used within different measurements of poverty have been examined and compared. The Group has identified:

(a) The most important methodological and statistical challenges in which participants are working;

(b) Statistical sources, concepts and classifications used for poverty measurements;

(c) Work under way to improve the timeliness and quality of sources and estimates;

(d) International experience to move towards common practices in the measurement of poverty;

(e) Institutional agreements towards the comparability of measurements in different regions;

(f) Use of poverty statistics in the monitoring of poverty alleviation policies at the international level.

Products

Papers and final reports of the first three meetings have been published by ECLAC, bibliographies of which can be accessed from the ECLAC publications web site at: http://www.eclac.org/publicaciones/default.asp?idioma=IN or http://www.eclac.org/publicaciones/ (Spanish) under the documents codes LC/R.1814, LC/R.1960 and LC/R.1998. The agenda and documents of the meetings can be found on the web site of the Group at: www.ibge.gov.br/poverty.

Planned activities

The Group has compiled a very significant quantity of documents that reflects the work finished and under way in the area of poverty statistics. It has been possible to group the work in the following headings: absolute poverty (including income measurement topics); unmet basic needs; poverty deprivation and social exclusion, including relative and subjective poverty; poverty dynamics; equivalent scales; strategies for improvement of information; international strategies for poverty alleviation; and international comparisons. Those topics only have an operative character since different groups of participants are working on them. Therefore, it is possible to constitute small working groups able to produce some synthetic work on those topics, which will facilitate the achievement of the future work planned.

Expected future products (dates)

The next meeting will discuss the work achieved on the topics above with the goal of producing a compendium on best practices in the area of poverty statistics. After evaluating the work done, the topics will be ordered in a more conceptual and operative index. The Group would like to submit to the Commission the work it has conducted and the outline of the compendium for evaluation by the Commission at its thirty-fourth session, in March 2003.

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